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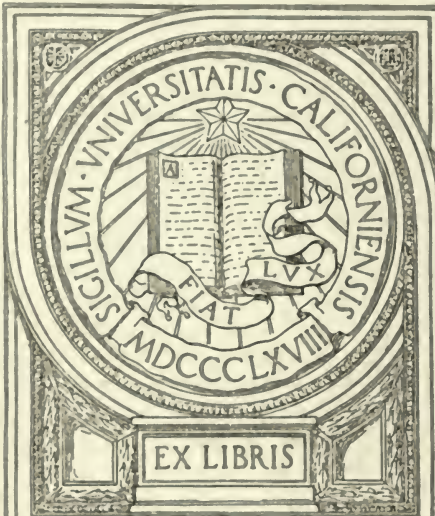
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# The SON of MAN

## DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

*By B. Russell Herts*



FRANK SHAY, *Publisher* 1916



Might better be called *Jesus the Socialist*

Language unpoetic unfortunate lapses to  
incidents ill-chosen ~~commonplace~~ phrases  
emphasized by an  
occasional phrase of  
unusual beauty





THE SON OF MAN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

Depreciations.

The Decoration and Furnishing of Apartments.



# THE SON OF MAN

A Drama in Four Acts

By *Benjamin* B. RUSSELL HERTS



NEW YORK  
FRANK SHAY  
1916

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H575-  
son

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# THE SON OF MAN

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ACT I. *Outside the house of Jesus and Mary, the Mother, at Nazareth in Galilee.*

ACT II. *The hut of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem.*

ACT III. *Outer courtyard of the Temple of Jerusalem.*

ACT IV. *Within the hut of Jesus on the Mount of Olives.*



## CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Son of Mary.

Mary, the Mother.

Mary of Magdala.

Pontius Pilate.

The Twelve Apostles.

Zebedee.

Salome, wife of Zebedee.

Saducee and Pharisee priests, merchants, poor people and Roman soldiers.

## PREFACE

When I conceived the notion of writing "The Son of Man," I determined to drop from my mind all curiosities and accomplishments; to forget all the hampering conventions that surround this subject, and to labor with careful devotion in the making of a work of art that should exhibit the world's greatest figure in a fresh and vital and inspiring way to the people of today.

I explain this original process of mine, not because I imagine that I have fully succeeded in this ambition but so that readers of the play may understand the psychology of its author at the time of its construction—an understanding which may be no less necessary than that of the psychology of the characters. Without the knowledge we have gained, from hundreds of essays, of the changing mental outlook of Ibsen and Strindberg, we should be far less capable of grasping the sense of their plays, while the prefaces of Mr. Bernard Shaw have served to the skeptical as assurances of his seriousness of purpose.

In this play, I have allowed myself the greatest possible liberties. I have been historical only when it suited me. I have taken lines attributed to Jesus in one period of his life and placed them in another. I have pictured the people whom I use in a way for which there is often no biblical foundation, and I have used the works on this subject of Renan, Josephus, Maeterlinck, Mr. Bouck White and others whenever I found anything in them that seemed fitting.

My explanation of this unheard of procedure is that, from my standpoint, the supreme importance of the figure of Jesus in the world today is not dependent upon the truth

## THE SON OF MAN

or untruth of what has been written about him in the Bible or elsewhere, or upon his divinity, or even upon the likelihood or unlikelihood of his existence, but that it is entirely due to the wealth of beauty and idealism that has come to surround the name Jesus in the minds of millions of people in every generation, a fortunate inheritance to which every generation has contributed. My reason for attempting the expression of my own conception is that I find the most generally accepted pictures unsatisfying, and I am led to believe that many other people find them so. It is inevitable that the world's vision of a man, expanding and amplifying through nineteen centuries, should have become over-elaborate, muddled and not thoroughly suited to the present needs of the race. My effort has been to select from the tangle of ideas, qualities and characteristics that has grown up, such points as conform to the scientific and intellectual developments of modernity, and since these same developments have rendered the drama modernity's most popular literary form, I have woven my concept into a play.

I do not think it should be considered objectionable to place the figure of Jesus upon the stage, any more than it is to place a painter's idea of him upon canvas, or an author's in print. The theatre is being rapidly transformed from a place of vulgarity and ugliness into one of great physical beauty furnishing a basis for a vast intellectual and ethical influence. But, finally, the very production of the play, if it ever takes place, must be in its own justification, and that is all there is to be said about the matter.

B. RUSSELL HERTS.

NEW YORK CITY, *August 20th*, 1914.

ACT I.





# The Son of Man

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ACT I.—*Outside the house of Jesus and Mary the mother, 22 A. D. On the right, the rough stone structure and outside of it, before the door, a large mat and a few cushions, a painted chest, two clay pots, and a couple of rough-hewn benches. A stony path leading up to the dwelling from the main road across the back. A few clumps of wild flowers here and there.*

*In the background, in a hollow backed by mountains, the village of Nazareth: a heap of huts, built without style, not differing much from cubes of stones, without elegance, but agreeably surrounded by vines and fig-trees, fresh and green gardens.*

*There are indications that if we were to ascend one of the hillsides a little, the prospect would be splendid. There is the outline of Carmel on the left, and at the back, the double summit above Megiddo; the mountains of Shechem, with their holy places of the patriarchal age; and the bosom-like Tabor. Through a depression, the valley of the Jordan and the high plains of Perea.*

*The curtain rises on a moment of silence and then several groups of bent and wrinkled men and women enter and stand or crouch near a vine that grows on the left of the stage. A Pharisee follows, speaking to an old man.*

## THE SON OF MAN

THE OLD MAN: Yet we harm no one in the sight of God.

THE PRIEST: It is not meet, it is not meet.

THE OLD MAN: We come here, in all quietness, to await him. We do not stir and there is scarcely a word spoken.

THE PRIEST: Nevertheless, it is not well that you should come here. That woman there—(*He points his stick at the group.*) She is a leper. Does she not know that lepers are not permitted in the towns?

THE OLD MAN: All come to him; there is none turned away.

THE WOMAN: (*Coming up.*) I am not a leper. He says it is my soul must be cured, and that he will take me with him this day into the south.

THE PRIEST: This man is mad; he would infect the whole community with his sorceries. (*Two other Pharisees enter.*)

THE PRIEST: (*Turning to them and pointing to the old men and women.*) Here is the dung heap of Galilee.

THE OLD MAN: (*Who has rejoined his group.*) Dung heap he called us—dung heap! (*Others repeat "Dung heap, dung heap," and there is a murmuring throughout the throng.*)

THE SECOND PRIEST: (*Raising his staff and approaching them.*) Silence, ye Syrian swine—! (*The old men and women cower in a corner of the stage.*) Unclean beasts,

## THE SON OF MAN

born in the slimy ditches of the south! Keep off from God's anointed ones! (*He turns to his companion priests.*) These meetings here must cease. Jesus debases our profession and makes the filthy of the world his fellows. If he could have his way, the first would be last, and the last first.

THE FIRST PRIEST: He is an anarchist, an agitator of the unworthy——

THE SECOND PRIEST: He associates with the Samaritans——

THE THIRD PRIEST: He breaks bread with Persians, Greeks and Syrians——

THE SECOND PRIEST: He preaches the resurrection of the dead——

THE FIRST PRIEST: He speaks of a new earth and a new Jerusalem——

THE SECOND PRIEST: He says that all shall be saved——

THE FIRST PRIEST: And that the world shall be destroyed

THE THIRD PRIEST: He is a hater of the holy Sanhedrim —(*They are in the midst of their arraignment when Pontius Pilate enters from the back accompanied by a Roman soldier bearing the insignia of the Senate and the Roman People. Pontius is handsome in his dress of a Roman officer, and not of an official. At this time he is in charge in Galilee but has not yet been advanced to the position of Procurator of Judea. Some of the poor men and women are crouching in the left corner; others have withdrawn down the road.*)

## THE SON OF MAN

FIRST PRIEST: Hail to thee, Pontius Pilate, viceroy of the sublime Augustus! Hail!

PONTIUS PILATE: And to ye, viceroys of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, each sublimer than his father. I am looking for the sublimest of your race! I seek the gentle paranoiac - Jesus of Nazareth.

THE SECOND PRIEST: And we too seek him, Pontius Pilate, we priests and these foul haters of the rich. We have come to remonstrate with him against these gatherings.

THE FIRST PRIEST: For while he cures the people, he discourses to them and tells them tales of insurrection.

THE SECOND PRIEST: Yea, and the laws of the noble Augustus must be enforced.

THE THIRD PRIEST: Jesus offends against the laws of Rome.

THE FIRST PRIEST: He would cause workmen to rise against those who pay them their hire, and so industry would cease and famine would come upon the land.

THE SECOND PRIEST: And often the workman who is paid is not worthy of his hire.

PONTIUS PILATE: You take him too seriously, my friends. We Romans find such men in every land. Besides, this Jesus is a gentle and diverting creature. Perhaps I shall relieve you of your difficulties, by taking him with me into the south.

## THE SON OF MAN

FIRST AND SECOND PRIESTS: You—you, the viceroy of Rome?

THIRD PRIEST: Surely sedition does not meet with favor, the anarchy is not to be endured.

PONTIUS PILATE: Nay, as you know, Rome forces from all people what she wants: gold, labor, spoils. Beyond that, Caesar cares little what they do. In Athens, the gentle Jesus would have been listened to and loved—even by the highest. Here it is only the poor who are not blinded to him. But, then, if he had been a Greek the sweet man would have had a sense of humor and that would have been fatal to his philosophy.

FIRST PRIEST: Nay, my lord, we cannot understand these Western epigrams. We are simple folk, who live in bare houses, eat light diet, and walk forth in the sunlight thinking simple thoughts. We would know whether you will take this man with you to Jerusalem.

PONTIUS PILATE: (*Smiling.*) If he will come, surely; on the word of a Roman. I have spoken to him and found him as receptive as a sane man. But here's his best-beloved mother: we must have her sanction too. (*Pontius goes down the road and, as Mary enters, takes her by the arm to help her along the rough path. She is a tall, beautiful woman, great in mind and body.*) (*The priests return to their harangue.*)

FIRST PRIEST: We shall be well rid of him.

SECOND PRIEST: I have said again and again that these meetings must cease.



## THE SON OF MAN

THIRD PRIEST: It is wrong to bring infected persons into the village.

FIRST PRIEST: And today there is a famous prostitute come to visit him.

SECOND PRIEST: Yes, a prostitute of Magdala whom the people have threatened justly to stone.

FIRST PRIEST: He makes the poor complain more and more about their taxes.

SECOND PRIEST: Yes, and we must force them to pay more, so that we may have Caesar's good will.

THIRD PRIEST: They are beasts, these people he has gathered about him. (*They all talk more or less at once and more and more angrily.*) (*Pontius and Mary walk across the back, look a moment at the priests, and go out on the right.*)

FIRST PRIEST: Lepers, miscreants, thieves—

SECOND PRIEST: The man is a fool—

THIRD PRIEST: He thinks he can remake the world.

FIRST PRIEST: Sorcerers, devils, vermin of the desert—

SECOND PRIEST: He is an anarchist—

THIRD PRIEST: Did you not hear the noble Pilate call him by some strange name?

FIRST PRIEST: A son of Satan!

SECOND PRIEST: A dog of the Devil!



## THE SON OF MAN

ALL OF THE PRIESTS: Disease monger! Beast! Con-sorter with thieves! Turn him out upon the road! Cast him back into the manger! (*In the midst of a considerable uproar, Jesus enters, a little in advance of Pontius and Mary, who seat themselves on the right. Jesus is slightly bearded; he has his hand on his forehead and looks off into the distance. Finally he stands by the roadside gazing earnestly at the Priests with tearful eyes. Suddenly they become silent, turn to him, and then, lowering their eyes, depart.*) (*Jesus comes to his mother, who is trembling violently, and kisses her hands.*)

MARY: I am fearful for you, Jesus, though I have helped to make you one for whom I must fear.

JESUS: Nay, mother, thou dost know Fear is the great destroyer. Souls die of fear; and all work shall perish, if fear be wrought with it. Only those are deathless who know no death, as only they are of God who can conceive Him.

PONTIUS PILATE: I conceive Him most delightfully in Bacchus.

JESUS: Thou hast no thought of him, Pontius.

PONTIUS PILATE: Nay, I assure thee, Bacchus receives much of my attention.

JESUS: My thought is of man. In him—in those that suffer and rejoice in his world—shall I find God.

PONTIUS PILATE: Nay, Jesus, does not even your old Hebrew prayer cry out to your old Hebrew God, "What is

## THE SON OF MAN

man, that thou art mindful of him?" Would you have me quite unreasonable?

JESUS: Thou art a man, yet Man can mean so little to thee. (*Pontius smiles.*)

PONTIUS PILATE: A certain man means much.

JESUS: I wonder, Pontius, if I *be* a man.

PONTIUS PILATE: Jesus, be serious; I meant not thee, but me. Thou art the greatest egotist in history. I frankly think upon myself, but thou expectest all the world to think on thee.

JESUS: Yet am I never—thoughtful of myself.

PONTIUS PILATE: It would be as natural for thee to think upon thyself (or any other individual) as for me to take but a single cask of wine with my dinner.

JESUS: Dost thou more?

PONTIUS PILATE: Ay, innocent; I bathe twice daily in yellow wines of Greece at present, for I have come to hate your mineral Galilean water, even when it comes not to my mouth. But we have other matters for discussion. It grieves me to be serious; but I am anxious to save thee from these fretting Pharisees and I have spoken to your mother of my wish to have you journey with me to Jerusalem.

JESUS: And my mother?

MARY: Jesus, your worth shall not be hampered by my

## THE SON OF MAN

wish. Sooner or later you must go into the world. This is perhaps the moment for your coming.

JESUS: Mother, is this the hour that hovered always in your thoughts? (*Mary bows her head.*)

PONTIUS PILATE: Ay, 'tis settled. We shall start soon after sunset. I, with my cohort; you, with such followers as you choose. Moreover, my friend, there is a creature of beauty will visit you today. She comes from Magdala, and she is fair of skin, with rare dark tresses and a body that all lovers of the beautiful are praising.

JESUS: All?

PONTIUS PILATE: Ay, for many have seen her, as you shall today. (*He tosses his handsome head joyfully and goes toward the back.*) And now, my dear curer of the sick, dost thou love me?

JESUS: I love Man and Woman, Pontius—and our Father, God.

PONTIUS PILATE: I am no woman, Jesus.

JESUS: Thou art my brother.

PONTIUS PILATE: And thy friend.

JESUS: Yet thou dost unrighteously. I have told thee so often.

PONTIUS PILATE: I cannot help it, Jesus, my friend. That which thou sayest means nought to me. I do not know this *God*; he is not necessary to my life; I think not on him. It is enough for me to love my friends, to dwell with men

## THE SON OF MAN

in justice, with women in affection, with wine in abundance, with thought in extravagance and with sorrow in elimination. I care nothing for thy heaven or thy million souls of the future.

JESUS: Yet thou art my friend?

PONTIUS PILATE: Ay, Jesus, it is so. For thou art beautiful, and therefore I love thee. But thou hast grave faults. Thou almost makest me serious.

JESUS: Would it were so.

PONTIUS PILATE: Nay, seriousness is a vice second only to goodness.

JESUS: Pontius——

PONTIUS PILATE: Oh, thou art beautiful in spite of both of them. (*He rises.*) Thy beauty shall beam upon me at the setting of the sun. Fare thee well, *mater sancta*. (*He goes, smiling and pressing his sword lightly to his side.*)

JESUS: (*Looking into the distance.*) Lord, may he sorrow some day, and find his soul. (*He turns.*) Mother, I shall go to the poor along the roadside and then come to thee. We shall find souls in them, I know. There are a score who must wander with me down the southern roads and come with me at last, perhaps, even to the Temple.

MARY: Go to thy tasks, my son, and think not too greatly of the base, brutal things that deserve destruction, but of the beauty and the strength that men can gather for their children down the ages.

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: But, mother, recollect that Rome is joined unto the Temple in a deep, dire, robbing warfare on mankind.

MARY: Yea, but it is only by thinking and by love, that God's will is fulfilled. (*She goes into the house.*) (*From the left comes Zebedee, bearing his wife Salome on his arm. He is a powerful man, comfortably dressed; she is slight, with a wan beauty and a nervous manner.*)

JESUS: God be with you and bless you, brother and sister!

ZEBEDEE: Thanks, Rabbi; we have dire need of His blessing.

JESUS: Has the shadow of a sorrow been cast across your house? (*Jesus sits upon one of the pots and Zebedee takes Salome to a bench beside him.*)

SALOME: Oh, woe!

ZEBEDEE: Jesus, the soldiery have seized my son and sheep and taken them across the hills. To-day we have heard of his death in the Samaritan mountains.

SALOME: Alas, for our child!

ZEBEDEE: And our living. We have but two ewe lambs left and they cannot be bred. It will take a score of years to build our flock again.

SALOME: We are undone. To God and man our life is worthless now. Woe, woe!

JESUS: (*Placing his hand on Salome's.*) Nay, sorrow



## THE SON OF MAN

not for thy son or thy substance. Both have crossed the distant hills; but life is here, love is here, and within you is the Kingdom of God.

ZEBEDEE: She has been so for eight and forty hours. Never a moment has she slept, never a morsel has she eaten; every word and thought and act has been sent from hell to her. First she would cry out against our son and tear her hair and silver froth would come upon her lips. Then she would curse me for my fatherhood and cry out to the Lord to strangle her. Then, when that passed, perhaps in tears she would bewail our fate as now, or in wild laughter mingling with wild cries, dash forth into the black air of the night, plunging her bared breasts in the black wind, torturing her body with wild-flying hands. . . . She is quiet now. It is the only time in eight and forty hours.

SALOME: Oh, cure me, Rabbi; save me from myself.

ZEBEDEE: She has a dozen devils playing with her soul. . . . We were so happy but a week ago. . . . Can you not purge her—give her back to me?

JESUS: We shall see. (*He rises.*) Come with me, Sister. (*Salome tries to rise and cannot. Jesus places his hand on her shoulder and looks into her eyes.*) You can follow, sister. Rise. (*She rises.*) Walk beside me. (*Together they cross the garden to a bench on the other side. Zebedee goes to the left where he is joined by several old men.*)

JESUS: Sister—Salome—look into my eyes. Remember this: there is no hurt but God can make it well, there is

## THE SON OF MAN

no harm but God can make it help. (*He takes her hands in his.*) God is within you. . . . The grandeur of the centuries is buried in your heart. Israel suffered that you might be here and came down through a hundred generations that you might be born. . . . Do you hear me, wife of Zebedee? (*Salome's face takes on a new sweetness of expression.*)

SALOME: I hear a voice that chants the music of the stars.

JESUS: Salome—Sister—your husband awaits you and is ready for you. He is yonder and his face is seared with sorrow at your wretchedness. Remember, it is joy we are put here to bring. God is within you and God is the giver of joy. Give heed to the voice of God that shall drown all voices other than his; give heed and love. Go to your husband with the peace of love in your heart, and may the gloried Father of Creation keep within your spirit and bless you forever! (*He takes her face between his hands and kisses her three times upon the forehead. She rises, smiling, yet a little dazed, and walks back across the garden to where Zebedee and the others stand open-mouthed and wonder-smitten. Before reaching him she clasps her hands once and then flings them apart and runs into his arms. Jesus slowly follows her across the stage and, after a minute, addresses the group that has formed.*)

JESUS: Let those who love Jesus of Nazareth take no thought of the morrow, for at sunset to-day he fares forth toward the southern sea.



## THE SON OF MAN

AN OLD MAN: Shall the light of the world be taken from Galilee? (*He goes to Jesus and touches him.*)

A WOMAN: Shall the poor in spirit be robbed of their beloved?

VOICES IN THE CROWD: Nay—nay—we are undone—Jesus stay with us!

JESUS: Those who would establish the Kingdom of God shall go with me. Out upon the plains at sunset there shall be a feast, to which each of you shall bring the best of his store. Zebedee, who was rich, has only two lambs, and those he shall slay, and give of them to the rest. Those who go with us shall bring what they will. . . . To-day ye shall eat and drink and be joyful on the earth. Take ye, therefore, no thought of the morrow, for sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (*One by one the men and women pass him and walk, with varying degrees of rapidity, down the road at the back of the garden. Some touch the garment of Jesus, others take him by the hand, a few women kiss him. Finally, after all have passed, Mary of Magdala, who has been hidden in the back of the group, comes and stands before him. She is simply clad and soiled from travel. Jesus looks at her for a full minute without speaking.*)

JESUS: And from where do you come, maiden?

MARY OF MAGDALA: From afar—beyond where the greyest hills sink in green meadows. I am from the fertile region of Magdala.

JESUS: And where, maiden, do you go?

## THE SON OF MAN

MARY OF MAGDALA: I go on the stony way to Jerusalem; but I am no maid, and that is my ill.

JESUS: I knew you had sorrowed. I felt you had sinned.

MARY OF MAGDALA: I am the scorned of men . . . but I cannot feel that I have sinned. My mother was poor and I comforted her; my father was ill and I eased his pain. Oh, I have labored for a dozen years, and borne want and hardship, I have drudged and sacrificed that they might live to drudge and sacrifice. Woman has but a single gift, one value, one reward. If she gives that she may live and suffer; if not, she is cast among the beggars of bread.

JESUS: Yet if she gives herself, nought is left to her.

MARY OF MAGDALA: So, Jesus, I have felt. And so I have gone forth and come to you. At Jerusalem I shall try to live by work, as men do.

JESUS: And do you sorrow for that which is past?

MARY OF MAGDALA: Shall I sorrow for a virgin soul? My body has been sold, polluted and disdained; but I have saved my soul.

JESUS: (*Looking away into the distance.*) Who saveth his soul shall lose it.

MARY OF MAGDALA: I shall give it but once, and the time is not yet. (*Jesus looks down at her again, and she gazes straight into his eyes.*) (*He takes her hands from where she has clasped them upon her knee and draws her up to her feet.*)

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: I, too, am destined for Jerusalem. Ere eventide they shall assemble here who go to establish the Kingdom of God. Wilt thou come? (*She bows her head.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: (*In a whisper.*) Ay.

JESUS: May the everlasting Father of all creation bless you and keep you and shower you with the glory of His spirit. (*He kisses her on the forehead. She shivers ecstatically and then bends and kisses his hands and goes.*) (*Mary the mother, who has been standing in the doorway comes toward her son.*)

MARY: My boy, there are strange fires in life that have been shown to you only as the tossing of reflected flames. (*Jesus, without hearing her, looks out over the road on which Mary has gone.*) My son, let me stir you for the tasks of the day, for one must live as well as dream. (*Slowly Jesus turns toward her, awakes, and clasps her in his arms.*)

JESUS: Beautiful mother, dearest one! Oh, how I love the world to-day! Every speck that flies in the air, and the beams of glory that cast glow upon glow on the world. I would romp with every child of Galilee, and tear across the meadows and hillsides, loving the beasts of the fields, and the flowers and ferns, and all that gives life and joy to the children of men.

MARY: And the woman that wanders on the road?

JESUS: Yes, she! Did you see? The wonder of a blossom coming to flower. Oh, I love them all, all the wonder-

## THE SON OF MAN

ful people of the world! All the poor and feeble and the sick, each is a brother or sister worth the comforting! Souls! What is there in all the universe like the bursting soul of youth?

MARY: Jesus, my dearest son, thou must beware of this same bursting soul of youth.

JESUS: And shall I fear the greatest gift of God?

MARY: This gift brings sorrow on the heads of men. Sit thee down there, Jesus. Let me tell thee something that thou ne'er hast known. (*Jesus is seated expectantly. Mary runs her hand across her face and sighs.*)

JESUS: (*After a few moments.*) Mother, thou didst wish to speak.

MARY: Yea, my son, thou knowest so much of thy mother and yet hast craved so little to learn all the rest.

JESUS: I know that thou art wonderful among the mothers of the world; that whereas motherhood is often great and beautiful where'er, howe'er, it comes, thine has been like an ever nascent dawn, radiant with the warmth of quenchless love.

MARY: My son! (*He takes her in his arms for a moment and then they sit silently together on the rough-hewn settle.*) Will you think back what seems a myriad years? Will you imagine things that were? Will you conceive a strange young girl—not such as those who follow you about—but one alone, unloved, yet loving—everything; and knowing not her love. Such I was. And in the tumults



## THE SON OF MAN

of my mind, I'd wander in a frenzy or a calm out on the sands at nightfall, with my thoughts in Heaven. Then the dark would come, and with a laden soul I often sank upon the sand and fell asleep. Perhaps one moment, at the end, the stars would pierce me with a thousand-flashing light, and I would know the mysteries, and understand. But always when the sun rose I awoke to darkness once again, and wandered homeward, while the seeds of sand glinted about me like my speckled questionings. Oh, you do not know; I have made you simple of spirit, my son; my sorrows have saved you from the wonderings of the world.

JESUS: To me each thought comes like the drenching sunlight of the noon; illuming all and dominating all.

MARY: I know. But in my questionings your answers have been borne. . . . One night I slept, and in my dreams I thought a great thought that the people burned me for. They dragged me out, and spat on me, and stoned me and the Pharisees stood all about and watched them build a pyre for my death. I mounted on the faggots and was tied, and always overhead hovered the great thought that was scarce defined, but made all else, all suffering, all fears, turn into mockeries of those who watched. Suddenly, the flame enmeshed my body; pain aroused me, and I moaned and screamed. There seemed a weight upon me; and then, as I awoke, I thrilled with an undreamt desire. . . . I lay quite weakly on the sand, while a grey figure stole away in the mist. Morn was upon me and I aroused myself, not knowing that the night had brought me motherhood—and thee.

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: My mother!

MARY: Love there was not, nor lust, for me; I was a virgin, but for my pain and thee. . . . You know the story of kind Joseph's gift; his good name, his protection, kindness, help and care. But I am virginal to this hour, of love.

JESUS: Heavenly mother, wondrous one! Thou shalt remain so, with thy son to love.

MARY: I have remained so, with the love of God. I bore you in my bosom for His world. My great thought and my burning had made you. And so you came, a man child, on the earth; the son of no known man, and therefore of mankind.

JESUS: Mother, I have tarried with thee two and twenty years. But to-day I shall go forth into the larger world, doing my labors and finding them that shall love me. And if there be others that do not love me, I shall suffer even their hate to come unto me, that I may give and give for the good of men. (*Pontius Pilate has entered with a dozen men. There is a trumpet blast and Jesus turns toward him, raising his hand above his head in the Roman fashion of salute. Pontius returns it, and places himself at the gate.*) Here is Pontius, mother, ready to be gone. . . . The sun is shivering in the sheets of its death bed, borne along to a misty shroud. Soon it will be evening and we have far to cover ere the dawn. Will you not kiss me and go in? (*He bows before her for a moment. Then she kisses him on the forehead and mouth. At last, as she*

## THE SON OF MAN

*holds him, she gazes fixedly into his eyes and speaks the last speeches of the act.)*

MARY: Jesus, from all the ages have I carved thee; from all experience of all mothers; from all loves and all desires; from the vile lusts of David's concubines, and from the unshown glory of Isaiah's passion. All of this is in you. All that a mother could drain off from impulses that made her seek the stars; that came like blinding furies sweeping across desert sands—such things are thickened in your blood; such things and countless other hopes and fears and loves I have uprooted from the ages and planted bleeding in your heart.

JESUS: Mother, mother, my beloved!

MARY: Nay, I am nought to you. You have a world to serve. You shall march down beneath the arches of the years, not feared as Caesar, but beloved, as no man in the world has been. (*She places her hands on his shoulders.*) You shall go forth from me, Jesus. You shall go out into all the world. And wherever you may go, men shall love and follow you, and what you tell unto them shall be treasured from generation to generation.

JESUS: Nay, mother—

MARY: Jesus, be silent, for I know. I have loved as woman never loved, and suffered as only those who bear the petty hatred of the world. God shall give you love, always, from men, because your mother was outcast of men. Be not brave in battle nor wise in council, but first of all the world in love!



## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: I am dazed. I do not know what use to make of the power surging in my veins. I am not clear where I shall help or how. But now, before thee, mother, all my life and strength I *will* to men, to help man in the world. Man shall be served eternally. Forever, until the Kingdom of God is come, in every generation shall there be men to whom my work shall pass and who will glory in the heritage. Surely in the things of the spirit to him who hath shall be given and from him who hath not shall be taken away. (*Jesus is in the center. Mary looks at him wistfully.*)

MARY: Jesus—(*With infinite love he turns to her.*) Thou art my son—and God's. (*Mary the mother turns toward the hut, and Mary of Magdala comes behind Jesus and speaks to him in a whisper.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: Art—thou—ready? (*Jesus turns and gazes at her and beyond.*) Come.



ACT II.



# THE SON OF MAN

## ACT II

*The hut of Jesus on the Mount of Olives above Jerusalem. Below, the orchard of Gethsemane, and plantations of olives, figs and palms. On the mountain-side two great cedars, their branches crowded with clouds of doves.*

*From the hut, half-way up the hillside, can be seen the Dead Sea and the Jordan, and beyond them Mount Moriah and the terraces of the temple and its roofs, covered with glittering plates of metal, which gleam in the sunset which completes the act.*

*Mary of Magdala is weaving, with Judas Iscariot beside her. He appears more agreeably than usual, as in the painting of the Last Supper, by Andrea del Sarto. For the first minute Judas plays upon the harp; otherwise there is silence.*

MARY: It is beautiful!

JUDAS: Really beautiful, dost thou think?

MARY: Yea, for it has the spirit of the Jews, they who hold the greatest happiness of men by bearing in their souls the sorrows of the world.

JUDAS: We are all men of sorrows, and sometimes I feel that I am destined to be the saddest of all men.

MARY: Thou shouldst be happy, being a leader to the light that shall shine on men for ages.

## THE SON OF MAN

JUDAS: But, shall I be? That is what haunts me when the light is dim. Shall I be brilliant among men? Shall I be whispered through the centuries, together with Isaiah, David and—and—

MARY: Jesus.

JUDAS: Jesus, Jesus. He it is shall conquer. He shall be known as the leader of our people.

MARY: Why dost thou envy him, Judas?

JUDAS: Ah, ah, if I could but tell thee! Dost thou not see it in my fear? Dost thou not hear it in my breath? Dost thou not read it in my eye? All things are his, all, all. Why must he conquer? Why must the tender of the earth possess the world? Why, can'st thou tell me, why? (*He has risen. Mary rises.*)

MARY: Judas, what would'st thou have? What is there Jesus hath, thou can'st not have? What wilt thou? Tell me. (*Judas turns about and coming close to her speaks with swift fierceness.*)

JUDAS: Thee. . . . Thy love is his; thy fears are all for him. (*She shrinks back.*) I would have thee, Mary, thee, thee. I am no demigod, but a man. I would love thee, Mary, bitterly, sweetly, tenderly, fiercely; with all the power of my soul; with all the strength of my body. . . . I have wept for thee, Mary; I have bowed down and glorified thy name; I have approached thee as Moses did the burning bush, wherein, he thought, flamed God's immortal fire. I have loved thee with love beyond all men's desire,



## THE SON OF MAN

which, flaming, purpled the heavens and the hills until my soul was drunken with the vision. Were I able, thou should'st have praise for men to sing in India and Egypt and far undiscovered lands when he and thou and I are tombed a thousand years.

MARY: Judas, thou dost wrong to Jesus. His love is not as thine. Would that it were! His love is not the love of other men—and I am but a woman. Yet I love him, as every woman does some man, some time. That being so, I can but do as God has chosen that I do. . . . Give me thy hand. (*Judas covers his face with his arms and turns away.*) Give me thy hand, my brother. (*He uncovers his face and his eyes are tearful. They clasp; he bows his head on her hand.*)

JUDAS: Oh, I am not so happy as my song, sweet Mary. The sorrows of the ages are too heavy for my brow. Sometimes I am fierce with hatred and with scorn. I could wound, kill—betray! Then I am mad. It seems as if my mind and will were gone. . . . When I am calm I love men and the world, and—him.

MARY: Child, child, cease, cease and I shall love thee into calm. (*Judas looks up.*)

JUDAS: Nay. He that would serve mankind must never love—a woman.

MARY: (*Shuddering.*) Hush! Hush! There speaks my greatest fear. (*Enter Peter and Matthew. They conform to their appearance in Leonardo Da Vinci's "Last*

## THE SON OF MAN

*Supper."* Peter is heavily bearded and stern, Matthew very clear cut.)

PETER: There is good news from every side.

JUDAS: (*Leaving his harp beside Mary.*) What is the news, O venerable brother? Of what new victories do you tell?

PETER: Of none to-day, but of great conquerings to come. War, war shall be fought; and Jehovah shall conquer through his sons. . . . Jesus is at the lake-side now, with John and James and the woman Salome. The people are gathering. All come to him. From every side they come: a score of singing shepherds from the end of Genessareth; merchants in Greek garb from the town; hunters from the hillsides about Hermon. Ten score were gathered when we came away and more and more were coming.

MATTHEW: Scarcely that many, Peter. I noted down a hundred on my tablets. A couple score may have come, in the last moments.

PETER: There may be half a thousand now. It matters not. They are all ours, ours, as all men shall be. . . . They say that the great Baptist joins our host today, and that will mean a thousand added to our ranks.

MATTHEW: I shall have the exact figures from John the Baptist's self when we confer. Then I can enter them.

JUDAS: It is true they come to him from every side. See how we ourselves have come: thou and Andrew from Capernaum, Peter; James and Jude from Galilee; Matthew,

## THE SON OF MAN

here, who has been a publican, from the city; John from the Baptist's throng and myself from Southern Kerioth. What is it draws us into the same mesh and tosses us together from the corners of the earth?

MATTHEW: It is the will of God that it be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet.

PETER: It is that all good men may join hands in the war of wars, the struggle that is greater than conquest: the battle of the people for that which has been taken from them.

MARY: It is love. (*They turn to her sharply, as if they had not known she was among them.*) Nay, let my woman's instinct speak. . . . Ye have not come thinking of Esaias, nor yet of the wounding that I fear must come. Like him, in the days at Nazareth, ye have thought first of the love of men and the help ye could give them. That, ye must bear always in your minds, though hate has come into your hearts. For when ye have fought a hundred battles and mastered the masters, then will the people *still* cry out for love. Love, love thine enemies—even as ye kill them. Thou canst not conquer but by love. . . . I must go to him. I must be with him when the men are arming. (*As she goes, the rest are silent, pondering.*)

JUDAS: There spoke the voice of the mother of men. It is strange how they who never will be mothers often know what, if all mothers knew it, would make a world of God's own sons. (*Judas goes into the hut, taking his harp with him.*)

## THE SON OF MAN

PETER: We must bestir ourselves, Matthew. We must conquer swiftly, soon.

MATTHEW: Hast thou heard that Livia has put Tiberius upon the throne and tyranny now walks in nakedness at Rome?

PETER: Do we not see on every hand that Rome has fastened bondage on the world? The Empire is a vast anklet circling about the earth, embracing every nation, tongue and climate into one common mass of plunder.

MATTHEW: Years ago the high priests opened Jerusalem to Pompey; and now all rulers and all aristocracies combine with Rome to wreck the nations that have nourished them. . . . Speak to the soldiers quartered on our poor and they will tell you of the boundless, brutal wealth of Rome. . . . Augustus, ere he died, in one forenoon had thrice a thousand gladiators slaughtered by four hundred lions leaping from silver cages for the people's sport. And, in their thirst for blood, women and dwarfs were driven in the fight with red-hot irons; and afterwards, slave girls from Syria danced naked in pools of wine and blood.

PETER: God of Israel, thy people's land is but the feeding ground of a new nation given up to gluttony and lust. Help us to save the lowly of the world! (*John, the youngest and handsomest of the Apostles, clad in a light drapery and with bare feet, comes running from the right.*)

JOHN: Peter, I tell of victory! Redemption is at hand. Jesus has spoken, and Jerusalem—the world—shall hear.

## THE SON OF MAN

PETER AND MATTHEW: (*Together.*) Tell us! Tell us!

JOHN: A thousand workmen thronged the shores of the sea: fishermen, carpenters, smiths, workers in metal and artisans in wool. All was in hubub when the master came. Then, as he stepped upon a stone, the sun shot straight from Heaven on his head, and as they saw him, silence descended like an aureole. Silence; for one by one the thousand paused in speech; and every living thing that loved and labored, surged and sang in the world seemed, as these men, to still its sorrow and its joy. Little birds whose plumage dotted the forest stretches, whose forms flecked the sunshine with blues and lavenders—these, at this moment were quite songless; and the tall grasses swayed not with their accustomed whirr. The wind ceased singing in the trees; the russet meadows were aglow; in silence the branches swayed; and in our hearts there was the pause of a transcendent stillness, closing the gates of joy and locking sorrow too out of the soul. Then the Master whispered low, words that shall circle quite about the world, living forever in the minds of men. There were words, wondrous and terrible, that smote upon our minds and seared our spirits. He told of past iniquities and the redemption that must come. He spoke quite peacefully, but the crowd rose up, and with a mighty oath, pledged the destruction of the Temple. Some seized on branches from the trees and others rocks from the roadside and when I left, a thousand men were arming.

PETER: At last, Jehovah, I thank thee! At last has come the day, when all the evil of the earth shall perish, when un-



## THE SON OF MAN

belief shall disappear and error be no more! (*As he speaks, Jesus enters, followed by Mary of Magdala, Salome, wife of Zebedee, and a great crowd.*) Hail, Hail, Jesus our Saviour! Jesus, thou art the Saviour of the world!

JESUS: Nay, Peter, it is only at the uttermost moments that I think that. Often I know, as at this moment now, that error stays and unbelief. Destruction can do nought but clear the world for new truths, that in turn must prove untrue.

PETER: Then, wherefore, Master, shalt thou strike thy blow?

JESUS: To-day's good must conquer to-day's evil, which was the good of yesterday. Therefore shall I blast the Temple. I come not to destroy but to fulfill.

PETER: And so, to Jerusalem: to the raging city, where sin storms daily at men's hearts; the city of wealth, the synagogue city, where God meets man on payment of a coin; the city of pollution, where thousands slave until nightfall that they may rise at daybreak to slave again; and where a hundred concubines and their effete protectors reel in red riot, lusting for flesh with an insatiate thirst each draining makes more lustful than the last. Woe to the city of Solomon! Woe to a world, where millions starve that few may surfeit!

JESUS: Ye devour widows' houses; ye shall receive the greater damnation.

A MAN IN THE CROWD: Jesus, we shall follow thee to the ends of the earth.



## THE SON OF MAN

ANOTHER MAN: We are thine, henceforth, and only thou shalt lead us.

A THIRD MAN: Thou, Master, thou shalt bring us to the light.

FIRST MAN: Jesus shall be our king! (*There is a vast murmuring of assent.*)

JESUS: Brothers, my brothers. (*The throng resounds with a great cheer.*)

JESUS: (*Coming toward the throng.*) My kingdom is not of *this* world. But of another. Of a world where all men labor, a world where all men labor for love, for accomplishment in that world. There is neither money nor wealth in the world of my kingdom, there is nought except that which belongs to all. My kingdom is the kingdom of every man and of all women and all children. My kingdom is in the world of truth that never has been, yet shall be, on the earth. My kingdom is in the world of joy, of sorrow, of labor and care, of love and passion, of flesh and spirit and of everything except the hate, the lust, the avarice that rules in this world that man has given to his children. (*During the foregoing the representatives of the Temple have come: priests, hazzan, apparitor, shammasches, and deputies, each dressed in the robes of his office.*)

ONE OF THE PRIESTS: Jesus, such things are age-old; can you cure them?

PETER: Nay, the time is past for medicines.

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: (*Discovering the group of dignitaries.*) What is it that these men would have of me?

PETER: Speak, sons of Satan, speak. The Master would hear you. (*There are threatening signs from the crowd.*)

THE HIGH PRIEST: Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Man, King of the Jews, or whatever thou wouldst have us call thee, we are come in humility to know thy will. For we see that thou hast the voice of the people and perhaps, as the Romans say, the voice of the people is the voice of God. We have not felt it so; we have believed in the unalterable rules, in the laws of Moses and the Prophets. But perhaps thou art right. Speak to us and we are ready to listen; teach us and we shall learn. . . . Thou hast conquered, Nazarene; it is for thee to tell thy will.

THE APPARITOR: We are willing to worship in new ways. We are even willing to sacrifice the rentals of the booths in the Temple. . . . But let there be peace. (*The other priests repeat "Peace, peace."*)

PETER: (*Turning to them.*) Let us have flaming fires and a sword! Let us have blood from every whited throat glittering with the green of emeralds. Let us smear all the Roman filth with scarlet and eternal infamy, and let the false Jews who would be rich and powerful at their brothers' cost perish with Tiberius' slaves. Ye hypocrites, ye fools and blind, serpents and vipers, whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones! How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: Peace, Peter, silence. We must deal gently and thoughtfully with all.

PETER: But, Jesus, these are the words that you yourself have spoken.

JUDAS: (*Recognizing Jesus' phrases in Peter's onslaught.*) Ha, ha! (*The people at the back become nervous and unsettled and brush threateningly against the priests.*)

PETER: (*Taking Jesus aside along with Judas and Matthew.*) Jesus, thou cans't not hold a word with these men here. The people have risen and they are not to be stilled.

MATTHEW: That is true. It were better to dismiss all and to consider what may best be done.

JUDAS: It is a rising of Earth's disinherited, that cannot be restrained.

MATTHEW: We cannot proceed without the Baptist and it is dangerous to wait. Jesus, will you hold them?

JUDAS: Nay, they must not be held. Now is the moment, now, or our strength is gone.

MATTHEW: It were best to wait, perhaps.

JUDAS: Let us not wait, Peter, let us not wait. He will weaken if we wait till morn.

JESUS: Dost thou doubt me so soon? Brothers, we must do nought in thoughtlessness and hate. (*He comes forward and speaks to the crowd.*)

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: Go ye forth, men of Judea, and of Galilee and Bethabara and Capernaum or whencesoever ye come. Go ye into the city; and ye of the Temple, and my brothers and sisters, go ye with them, excepting John, who shall stay with me until nightfall. Tomorrow I shall be with you and ye shall hear what may come to pass. Until then, silence—peace—and the blessing of the Lord be upon ye. (*The priests withdraw. The crowd gradually and slowly and unwillingly and threateningly follows them.*) (*Judas goes.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: Jesus, I am afraid. . . . It is the first time. (*The apostles have drawn together at the side with Salome, wife of Zebedee.*) (*Enter Pontius Pilate alone and enveloped in a cloak. He is still, though older and less frivolous, the kindly aesthete of Act 1.*)

PONTIUS PILATE: Mary of Magdala, thou art right to fear. (*The Apostles look up in surprise and anger; then recognizing Pontius, they bow to him and retire.*)

MARY: Oh, save him, Pontius Pilate, and protect him. Thou alone canst help him among men.

PONTIUS PILATE: Nay, beautiful Mary, Jesus needs not Rome tonight. He speaks, as your high priest said, with the Voice of the People. And so long as he proclaims what the people desire to hear, he will speak with the Voice of God. . . . But beware, Jesus, my friend; lead them whither they would go, for no one is nearer destruction than he who commands the populace.

JESUS: Perchance thou art right, Pontius Pilate. Yet will I go with the people to the Temple. There is nought

## THE SON OF MAN

else. For some men it must always be so. . . . I have hoped all things, desired all things only for the world.

PONTIUS PILATE: In a thousand years, or in ten thousand, men may know that thou art right; but today thou mayest have to offer thy life to those who shall use it or destroy it.

JESUS: Man can but give his death to those who will not use his life.

MARY: He can be happy among men and living!

JESUS: Happy? Happy we have been! Happy—have we not all been: Peter, Matthew, John, my beloved ones? The people were blind and we have come into the world that they might see.

MARY: Yea, Jesus, I too have been happy in the love that hath made me the mother of all men and the wife of none.

PONTIUS PILATE: Listen, Jesus, to her; and learn from Epicurus to seize fast upon the only good that is given to man: his joys. . . . The priests are plotting thy death. They will be faithless to every pact. The people are changelings—thou canst not count upon their love from day to day. John the Baptist cannot aid thee, I fear, for he is captive in Herod's court.

MARY: Oh, woe! Jesus, wilt thou go forth without him?

JESUS: Even alone will I go, as alone I came—among men. But I must think again, whether to war or peace.

PONTIUS PILATE: Thou art safer in war, by far. Learn



## THE SON OF MAN

from Caesar. Let the masses kill each other. I shall be near at hand to protect thee whate'er befall; but be assured the people are riotous and will brook no word of peace.

JESUS: We shall see.

PONTIUS PILATE: Jesus, I cannot save thee; if thou lovest the backing of the crowd. . . . Farewell. (*Pontius salutes, raising his right hand high in the air.*)

JESUS: Pontius, if this be the end, I would have my loved ones near. Wilt thou send a soldier unto Nazareth for my mother?

PONTIUS: Ay. (*He goes, and Mary follows him weeping.*) (*Jesus is seated. John comes and sits beside him.*)

JESUS: John, John, thou hast the name of the Baptist, but thou art no conqueror. Yet thou hast that which is beyond good and which is lovelier than beauty and more potent than any excellence of the earth: a spirit warm and radiant with life and truth.

JOHN: My beloved Master! (*Jesus covers his eyes for a few moments and then goes quickly to the edge of the mountain side and looks toward Jerusalem.*)

JESUS: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings; and ye would not.

JOHN: (*Coming to him.*) Master, Master, be not mourn-

## THE SON OF MAN

ful. Did not Peter say thou shouldst conquer, and are there not thousands arming to follow thee?

JESUS: (*Putting his hand on John's head, and gazing into the distance.*) Nay, my son, that is what I wonder: whether it is best to conquer. . . .

Aug. 25, 1901

Dear Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st inst.

and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Yours truly,  
J. H. [Signature]

ACT III.





# THE SON OF MAN

## ACT III

*An outer courtyard of the Temple of Jerusalem, the architecture of high walls of the later Jewish period, influenced by Assyrian and Babylonian decoration. At the back, the huge gateway leading into the inner court, and beyond, the Sanctuary. The roofs are a mass of glittering metal, for the sun is shining. On every side the merchants' booths laden with their wares: silks, jewels, teas and confections, amulets and urns and prayer books; the owners moving about arranging their things to best advantage. Several priests cross from the inner court.*

FIRST PRIEST: But now we are assured that John no longer lives, we need fear nothing.

SECOND PRIEST: Ay, it is true, without the Baptist this Son of God would need to be the devil's grandsire to succeed.

THIRD PRIEST: However, one cannot be sure. We have only the vaguest rumors from the Court of Herod at Tiberias.

FOURTH PRIEST: And, besides, the people are so aroused they must force him on, even if he be unwilling.

FIRST PRIEST: It is impossible to tell what this man will do. He is gentle and fierce, proud and lowly, kind and hateful all in the same moment.

## THE SON OF MAN

SECOND PRIEST: Our best plan would be to have him imprisoned and then we shall be able to pacify the people by sending out wine and prostitutes and by throwing gold to them. It is not necessary any longer to offer compromises.

THIRD PRIEST: The people soon forget.

FOURTH PRIEST: Hark, our brother comes with Pilate. (*As Pontius Pilate enters from within, accompanied by a fifth priest, the others bow a dozen times and back away from him. He is dressed in the robes of a high civil official, with a band of gold about his head.*)

PONTIUS PILATE: Vox populi, vox Dei, and Jesus certainly has the voice of the people. We Romans have taxed and tortured the poor beyond all bearing, and you have helped us in the beastly work. This carnage and oppression bores me, and, most strangely, it seems to have become objectionable to the oppressed. The Jews are everywhere ready for battle, and Jesus is their logical leader.

THE FIFTH PRIEST: (*Who accompanies Pontius.*) But they must be stopped—there is danger. Rome must lend her protection.

PONTIUS PILATE: (*Laughing.*) Rome is a thousand miles away. Do you suppose our handful of pilferers could stand for an instant against a people really roused?

SECOND PRIEST: This Jesus must be put to death. We can bring charges against him.

## THE SON OF MAN

THIRD PRIEST: Yea, he stirreth up the people, and that is a crime according to the law.

PONTIUS PILATE: That, my friends, is always a crime according to every law, wherever the few who own everything are fearful of the many who create everything that the few own. Nay, you must find something better. For so long as Jesus leads the people in the way they would go, so long will he prove invincible. They will obey him, protect him, die for him. That is how Caesar—became Caesar. The Empire is grown over-large. Who knows but Jesus—

FIRST PRIEST: Thou speakest treason, Pilate.

SECOND AND THIRD PRIESTS: Treason, treason to Caesar!

PONTIUS PILATE: (*Haughtily.*) Hark, ye, Priests of Jerusalem, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's—learn that from him ye would destroy—but let your minds dwell on the things that concern them. (*He walks out on the right, the Priests bowing humbly behind him. Then they straighten up alertly and come together in the center of the stage.*)

THE FIRST PRIEST: We must proceed without him, and alone. The people will soon be here and then nought can be done.

THE SECOND PRIEST: Let the merchants close their booths and let us take the relics from the Temple to some place of hiding.

THE THIRD PRIEST: It may not be necessary but we must hold ourselves in readiness. (*The priests go about, one to*

## THE SON OF MAN

*each of the booths and converse with the merchants. During the ensuing scene the merchants are taking in their goods and trying to get away.)*

THE FIFTH PRIEST: Did you not think that Pilate showed a strange regard for this foul anarchist?

THE FIRST PRIEST: Ay, if there were time for news of it to get to Rome—

..THE SECOND PRIEST: Hush, hush, such words avail not.

THE THIRD PRIEST: And then, besides, it is strange but true that Rome cares little what becomes of us or our people. She must have gold; so long as that comes forth, Caesar is satisfied. *(The Priests go into the inner Court. The merchants have closed their stalls and are about to depart as a great crowd enters. The people are careless and unrestrained. The atmosphere is ominous.)*

THE FIRST MAN: Where is our Jesus?

A SECOND: Yea, we must have him now that John is dead.

A THIRD: *(A tottering old man.)* They say he comes not because he is kept by his concubines.

THE SECOND: Mayhap, but we shall have plenty such to occupy ourselves with when we've the gold rods of the Torah and the silver candlesticks out of the Temple.

THE FIRST: Um—m, I can picture myself sucking the lips of some young woman of the Palace of Tiberias.

A FOURTH: *(Coming up.)* There's young flesh to be

## THE SON OF MAN

had for the taking. The decrepit race of Herod are none to satisfy sensuous Jewesses.

THE THIRD: And Pontius will not interfere, for he hates Herod Antipas and his Grecian tribe.

THE SECOND: Yea, all we need is a leader.

A FIFTH MAN: (*Shouting.*) Where is Jesus? He shall lead us to victory.

SEVERAL: The Baptist is dead; long live the Galilean! (*The priests enter from the Temple bearing sacred relics.*)

THE FIRST MAN: Nay, these must not go from us! (*There is a scuffle, the relics are dropped and the priests flee.*) (*Enter Mary of Magdala. The men have crowded about the relics which are on the ground, but as one discovers Mary and pulls his companion's sleeve to call his attention to her, the others look up and gather about.*)

THE SECOND: Here is the mistress who has kept him.

THE FIRST: We know about her; she has been a whore for years.

THE FOURTH: Woman of Magdala, where is thy master, Jesus?

MARY OF MAGDALA: Alas, that he should come among ye, mad as ye are with lust and hate.

THE THIRD: Mad, dost thou say, foul woman? Mad is it, we are?



## THE SON OF MAN

SEVERAL: Mad, she said; mad. (*There is a vast rumbling in the throng.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: (*Sadly.*) If you have any pity or respect or love for him you call your saviour, show it now. He is weary; he has suffered; let him rest.

THE FIRST: She would seduce him from us.

THE SECOND: He shall lead us today.

THE THIRD: When I was a young man such a woman would have been stoned. (*They crowded about her threateningly.*)

THE FOURTH: He shall lead us today and after that there will be rest and luxury for all. Shall not we all have blushing breasts to kiss and warm pink women's bodies near our own?

MARY OF MAGDALA: Nay, hear me—

THE FIRST: She shall be punished, this wanton of Magdala.

THE THIRD: Yea, let her perish by stoning as I have said. She first, then Herod and his tribe, the priesthood, and all who question the rule of those who are descended from the prophets.

THE FIRST: Let her die!

THE SECOND: She shall perish by stoning according to the law. (*Mary stands quietly in her corner. The crowd is close to her now and some press upon her and touch her. At the back a noise is heard.*)



## THE SON OF MAN

THE CROWD: (*Off the stage.*) He is come! He is come! Way for Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth! (*The men on the stage take up the cry and make way for Jesus, who enters at the back, on the right, with Peter, Matthew, John and Judas, and comes up the stage, over to Mary of Magdala, at the front, on the left. She goes to him and clasps her arms about him. His head is bowed and he walks sorrowfully.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: They would kill me, Jesus, because I have loved much.

THE FOURTH MAN: She must be stoned because she has transgressed the law. But you, Jesus, shall appoint who shall begin the holy work. (*The crowd circles close about Jesus and Mary of Magdala. Jesus separates himself from her. Steadfastly he gazes into the eyes of the crowd. His lethargy of sadness has left him and he is tense and magnetic.*)

JESUS: (*Slowly and, pointing his finger at the men about him.*) He who is without sin among ye—let him first cast a stone at her! (*The crowd falls back a pace and its members begin to whisper in groups. Jesus leads Mary further to the side, where she is joined by the apostles John, Peter and Matthew.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: (*Putting her arms about his neck.*) Jesus, stay with me. We can be happy in the hills. We can return to Nazareth or Capernaum or go forth where'er you will about the world. Give up these thankless, lustful men. It is not time yet for your coming. Their children,

## THE SON OF MAN

as Pilate said, a thousand years from now, may greet you knowingly; but today you shall fail with them.

PETER: Jesus, thou art pledged to the attack. The world must be remade tonight.

JESUS: Thou art wrong, my beloved and my friend. My work is greater and more terrible than either of you know. I must turn them back. I must teach men where they err. John is dead. The greatest prophet and the mightiest man in Israel is dust. Alone I must teach men truth. *(He stands for a moment silent, and then raises his hand. The crowd gathers about him and an old man comes forward.)*

THE OLD MAN: Jesus, I am the oldest of your followers in Jerusalem for I remember the first and woeful coming of the cursed Romans. Therefore it is that they have chosen me to tell you the will of the free men of Judea. You are our prophet; you shall lead us. In all things you shall direct us: whom to slay and whom to leave among the living; what property to divide among ourselves and what to save for the general good. In all things shall we follow you, and especially in the struggle of all the down-trodden of the ages against their masters on this day of days.

VOICES: Yea, yea, the world shall be remade tonight. *(The hands of Jesus begin to tremble; his eyes look off beyond him who is speaking; he steps up a little above the crowd and begins his sermon in a far-away, mysterious voice.)*

JESUS: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the

## THE SON OF MAN

kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Ye are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. Ye have heard it said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. Judge not that ye be not judged. Therefore depart from me, ye that would work iniquity, depart. (*The crowd has become perturbed. There are words of opposition among them. Even the apostles falter. Only Mary of Magdala is radiant with joy.*)

PETER: Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

JESUS: Ye that follow me in the help of men—every one that hath forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for the world's sake, shall receive an hundred fold and shall inherit lasting life. But many that are first shall be last: and the last shall be first. Yet shall ye commit no sin in the name of God and of men. Thou shalt not murder. Go ye, there-

## THE SON OF MAN

fore, and teach. Go ye into all the world. (*Jesus falls back exhausted and is caught in Mary's arms. Peter comes forward furious. A roaring mutiny rises from the crowd. A rumble of thunder and a lightning flash.*)

MARY OF MAGDALA: Jesus, Jesus, my beloved.

JESUS: (*In a whisper.*) Thrice, thrice, Peter, shalt thou deny me ere the dawn.

A MAN IN THE CROWD: This is no son of God or man. He is a weakling and an outcast.

JUDAS: Let Peter lead us!

ANOTHER: Let Peter be our king!

ALL: Peter! Peter! Peter shall rule. (*Peter gazes at Jesus, fallen against Mary's breast. Then, the lust for power seizes him, and he rushes into the Temple. The multitude follows and there is a great crash within.*)

JESUS: Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. (*The remaining priests, who have been huddled within the Temple rush forth and, seeing Jesus, come upon him. There is further thunder and lightning.*)

FIRST PRIEST: Swine!

SECOND PRIEST: Cursed profaner of the Sanctuary.

THIRD PRIEST: Death, death, death!

FOURTH PRIEST: Death to Jesus, King of the Jews!

FIRST PRIEST: Crucify him, crucify him!

## THE SON OF MAN

SECOND PRIEST: Crucify him! (*There is another crash within, then a trumpet blast. The crowd rushes out of the Temple, up the stage and out on either side. The priests flee crying, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Following the crowd and driving them on, come the Roman soldiery who have entered the Temple at the back. Some of them bear the eagles and the emblem of the Senate and the Roman People, and others carry torches. In the midst of them comes Pontius Pilate in robes of state as Procurator of Judea, and with the old, cynical but still sweet smile.*)

PONTIUS PILATE: (*Sadly.*) Jesus, Jesus, my friend, thou shouldst have found Bacchus or Caesar kinder masters.





ACT IV



## THE SON OF MAN

### ACT IV

*The rising of the curtain discloses a reproduction in life of Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper; Jesus in the center on one side of a long table, with six of the apostles on either side of him. The table is laid in the inside of his hut on the Mount of Olives and the walls and furniture of the scene are simple: a number of stools and several of the earthenware pots. There are two narrow windows at the back, flanking the door which is always open, and discloses a beautiful landscape. After a full half-minute of silence Peter speaks.*

PETER: We have eaten. Now we must prepare. Those who are to watch the highroad and the hedges ought to take their places.

MATTHEW: (*Rising.*) We shall be gone, Peter, before the seventh hour. Every corner of the hillside shall be watched and all signs from the city shall be reported. (*All of the apostles, excepting Peter, Judas and John, go out.*)

JOHN: My dear Master!

JESUS: (*Who is still seated at the table raises his hand.*) Sweet boy, it is only death.

JUDAS: Jesus, let me speak frankly, once and for all time. There is no need for thee to die. Fare forth. Go into Galilee. Take ship for Persia or for Athens. Leave

## THE SON OF MAN

this battle here with us who belong to Judea, and who understand its people.

JESUS: It is never by battle that we shall conquer.

JUDAS: It is never by the peace that passeth understanding.

PETER: Judas is right. There is hellish evil in the world that nought but blood and fire shall dissolve. The mightiest war of all the ages must be fought and those who have oppressed and beaten the people must perish. . . . Thou art a man of peace, Jesus; this is not thy work. It would be better to go.

JUDAS: It is necessary to go. To stay means the destruction of our cause; ruin, betrayal—death.

JESUS: Yea, yea, yea, but I am ready to die. I have long ago determined that it should be so. If I live I shall be forgotten; my death will seal what I have said, upon the heart strings of the world. . . . Do you not see, Peter, that war shall not avail you? Wage your strife upon the thinking of mankind. All else is failure.

PETER: While you are changing men's thoughts, their bodies are starved and trampled under foot.

JESUS: Knowing that, I have spent a life of sorrow. Now, at its end, I see that sadness should not be ours because a generation suffers, but because, without new thinking, all the ages of the earth shall waste themselves in false and foolish striving. Give men an outlook on the world,

## THE SON OF MAN

O Peter, give them a brotherhood with all their fellows, and waste of lives and energies and thoughts will cease.

JUDAS: Jesus, the people have risen and are ready for war. Such sentiments mean death. I warn you, you will be betrayed; but no betrayal is needed. Already they are crying for your crucifixion. It is for us to collect what resources we can and lead them.

JESUS: Thou canst not conquer with the sword.

JUDAS: The poor must conquer as they can: by the voice when men would hear, by the pen when men would read, by the sword when all the earth is bent on war.

MARY OF MAGDALA: Yea, but to unbend them—that were a worthy struggle for thee, Judas.

JUDAS: Nay, we must learn the tactics of our masters: to lead the people with, and not against, their will. Opposing this will bring thee, Jesus, to thy death. (*A noise is heard on the hillside.*)

JESUS: If that be they, I am ready to receive them. (*Matthew rushes into the hut.*)

MATTHEW: Jesus, beloved Lord, they are arming, they are arming. The synagogue is crying for your death.

JESUS: I am ready.

MATTHEW: Master, there is time to take ship for Rhodes. A fishing craft lies waiting in the Phoenician waters.

JESUS: It is too late.



## THE SON OF MAN

MARY OF MAGDALA: (*Coming close to him.*) It is not too late. We will go with you. We will cross the hills, guarding you always among us, ever watchful for you, as children for a venerable father.

JESUS: It is too late.

MARY OF MAGDALA: No, it is not too late. It is not too late for safety and for happiness. Oh, come with us and be as a child, my Jesus. Come with us quickly as a young lad stricken with sorrow. Come with us and let us lead you.

JOHN: (*Coming to him.*) Master, I shall follow thee to the ends of the earth. (*Peter, Judas and Matthew turn away in sorrow.*)

JESUS: I am ready to die. Nothing that can come will be unthought of and unplanned. I have dreamed of this moment when men were most with me. It comes to every conqueror, leading him to his death or clinging to his name when he has died. Because I am now to die in the midst of my life, my work will live, as a gentle breath, cooling the brow of mighty men throughout the ages. (*One of the Apostles cries out on the hillside.*)

MATTHEW: (*Going to the door.*) There is a hooded figure on the road.

JOHN: A Roman comes. He is hidden in a cloak of purple. (*Pontius Pilate enters. He is clothed completely in golden armor, visible as he removes a dark toga that covers him.*)

## THE SON OF MAN

PETER: Pilate! (*John and Mary edge away from him in fear.*)

JESUS: Pontius, you are welcome.

PONTIUS PILATE: I come as a friend. . . . They have cried out against you, Jesus, in the marketplace and the temple. The world is your enemy today; and as the world turns so must Rome follow, for it is only thus that Rome can rule the world. . . . Jesus, thou knowest that I am thy friend. I have come with thee from Galilee; I have taken thee from thy mother's arms and watched thee gather the world at thy feet; and now that those that have followed thee turn upon thee in hate, I come but to save thee.

JESUS: Pontius, friend of my days of joy, I have finished the work our eternal Father has given me. In the world I have had tribulation, but be of good cheer, for my words shall overcome the world.

PONTIUS PILATE: Jesus, my friend, it may indeed be so. In the still watches of the darkness I have come to feel thee and know thee and I would not have thee severed from thy work. . . . I can delay the spiteful ire of the Saducees. I can delay all thine enemies until morning; but by then thou must have gone.

MARY OF MAGDALA: Oh, persuade him, Pontius Pilate!

PONTIUS PILATE: Yea, by morning thou must have gone deep into Syria. Or better still, I will have a galleon for thee in the waters below and Metellus shall take thee with a letter to Caesar. Caesar will welcome thee and sit at thy feet.

## THE SON OF MAN

JESUS: Why do men flee the one inevitable moment—the final rapture that can not be flown?

PONTIUS PILATE: Thou shalt have a new life. The years thou hast lived thou canst live again.

JESUS: I have been for thirty years upon the earth, but I have lived some centuries—I cannot tell how long or what number of men have lived in me. But I am weary with a weariness that comes to those who are finished and can go no farther. (*John and Peter cover their faces, Mary turns away while Pontius Pilate takes up his toga and throws it about him.*)

PONTIUS PILATE: You are like a king, and the word of kings is accepted in silence. (*He raises his arm in Roman salutation.*) Peace! (*He goes out.*)

PETER: You shall not be taken from us without a struggle.

MATTHEW: But, Peter, we have but two swords among us.

JESUS: It is enough. For you shall not contend for the salvation of my body. It is for you to save my words and my work, to see that neither perish from the earth.

JOHN: (*At the doorway.*) I see four men approaching, Master, and an aged woman, and among them is Malchus, an underling of the Temple.

JUDAS: It is the end. Master, mistaken one, farewell. (*Peter and Matthew get the swords and go out. Judas*

## THE SON OF MAN

*comes to Jesus, and as he kisses him Malchus appears in the doorway.)*

MALCHUS: That is he! That is he! Seize him! (*Peter rushes upon him and slashes his ear with his sword. There is a scuffle without. Exit Judas.*)

PETER: The slaves are gone, and one of them without his ear.

MATTHEW: (*Entering with drawn sword.*) They have gone, but they will come again. It is a matter of moments. (*Mary, the mother, appears in the doorway. She is wan with travel and leans upon a stick.*)

JESUS: Thou art wrong, my children. We cannot stand against them. Nor is it needful. Ye have work enough to do. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if you love one another. I have called you friends, and this I command you.

MARY, THE MOTHER: My son, my son! (*Those on the stage start in surprise. Jesus goes to her, they embrace, he helps her to enter, and they seat themselves.*) Ever art thou Jesus, ever the same, my son! I feared to come to thee. I feared I should find thee unprepared for what must come. I feared I should find hatred in thy heart, and fear upon thy lips. But thou art ever as I would have thee: loving thine enemies, fearing no evil, prepared for all things.

JESUS: Mother, Mother, my beloved!

## THE SON OF MAN

MARY, THE MOTHER: It was eight years ago when last thou saidst those words.

JESUS: (*Smiling wistfully, and looking into the distance.*) At Nazareth, in Galilee, on a stone bench in the garden of our cottage. I was a boy, thou wert my young mother, then.

MARY, THE MOTHER: Yea, we are older, now.

MARY OF MAGDALA: Mother, mother, they will crucify thy son.

MARY THE MOTHER: I have heard all, my daughter.

JESUS: I am ready, dearest mother.

MARY OF MAGDALA: God of woe!

MARY THE MOTHER: Thou knowest, Jesus, that they who will do thee unto death, act as they must act, being they, even as thou actest as thou dost, being thou. They are slaves of hate, as thou art lord of love. (*Mary of Magdala begins to weep.*) Daughter, daughter, come to me, stay with me. I have travelled long roads to be here at this moment. Be comforted that millions shall be happy because thou and I have lived, that millions shall love greatly because Jesus dies. (*The tramp of feet is heard. All the Apostles enter in silence. A growing brightness lights up the hill outside. During the next speeches, torches are seen in the doorway and a line of Romans bearing the emblem of the Senate and the Roman People. Jesus kisses Mary of Magdala and rests for a moment in his mother's arms.*)



## THE SON OF MAN

*Then he gives his hand to several of the disciples and last to John.)*

JESUS: Dost thou think now that I shall die, John?

JOHN: Nay, Master. Wheresoever men shall think and feel and reverence the beautiful and holy we shall bear thy life. So shalt thou live among men a thousand generations.

MARY THE MOTHER: Yea, and a thousand thousand. (*A pause.*)

JESUS: Fare thee well, my brothers. Be ye sons of God. (*He leaves. The soldiers file away with their torches. Mary of Magdala weeps with her head in the lap of Mary the Mother.*)











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